

**Welcome to the tenth year that the Rockford Chapter of AAUW has awarded regional female STEM students scholarship awards.**

Congratulations to the AAUW STEM Awardees for 2021. These students have achieved the highest academic successes, participated in academic and leadership extra-curricular activities and volunteered many hours at their school and also the community.

**Nontraditional Community STEM scholarship awardee:**



**Marla Gravino** is an upper-class honors scholar in Biochemistry at Rockford University in preparation for a Pharmacy Doctorate degree at UIC. She is not only a leader in the Alpha Helix science club, she also serves as the supplemental instruction leader and peer-tutor for introductory chemistry courses. Marla is identified as a Distinguished Scholar at RU; she also was earned the Award of Achievement in Chemistry from Chemical Rubber Co. Before attending RU, Marla graduated as the Valedictorian from Rockford Lutheran High School.

## High School Senior scholarship awardees:



**McKenna Handy** is on track to graduate Summa Cum Laude from Pecatonica High School where she served as President of the Senior Class and of the Key Club besides being Captain of the Softball team. She also is active in most of her high school organizations: Art Club, Book Club, Math Team, Science Club to name a few. McKenna plans to study for a career in Biomedical Engineering which is only 28% women, so she hopes to be a STEM career role model.



**Natalie Horgan** is planning to attend Purdue University to study Pre-Pharmacy on her path to a Doctorate in Pharmacy. Her goal is to study diagnostic tests for cancer to support accurate and affordable systems which will decrease the cancer mortality rates. While she attended Belvidere North High School, Natalie she was awarded many scholastic awards and also awards for her basketball and cross country successes.



**Phuong Pham** became committed to a double major in Mechanical Engineering and Material Science after experiencing a Research Apprenticeship Program at the University of Illinois in Urbana. She hopes to join engineers Without Borders focusing on water purification. While attending Auburn High School, Phuong had many leadership and research activities including winning many awards in the Science Olympiad State Tournament.



**Ava Sommer** is planning to study Neuroscience after taking all of the math and science courses offered at Auburn High School. Ava is a National Merit-Commended scholar who has won numerous Science Olympiad awards including first place in Chemistry lab, Geologic mapping, Experimental design and Astronomy. Outside of the class room, Ava is employed to teach at Mathnasium and participated in Marching Band and Wind Ensemble for all four years of high school.



**Megan Thiravong** is hoping to intern at Dow Chemical or General Motors as she pursues her degree in Mechanical Engineering. During her studies at Rochelle Township High School, Megan wrote an essay focusing on the geothermal processes when she “stumbled” upon a possible carbon-negative energy generation system. She is committed to continuing her research. “Megan is not only a member of the golf team, she’s the captain...of the boy’s team.” “Megan donated over 500 hours as she raised \$22,000 for local causes....and on and on....

Congratulations to all the awardees. And special appreciation to the AAUW membership and Board for their generosity in funding these scholarships. Awardees, please know that the Rockford AAUW is committed to the success of regional, female students who will be the future leaders in the STEM fields.